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Innosun's Namibian Wind Farm Lifted By Johnson Renew

The Ombepo Wind Farm, the first wind farm to be constructed in Namibia, is situated just outside Luderitz, Southern Namibia and is designed to inject 5 MW into the national grid managed by NamPower, the national utility.

The wind farm was built by InnoSun Energy Holdings (Pty) Ltd who secured the services of Johnson Renew to transport the larger components that make up the wind turbines to site and to undertake the installation of the components on site.

InnoSun is, to date, the largest IPP in Namibia with 20 MW of solar and wind farms currently in operation. Pioneering the renewable energy sector in Namibia since 2008, InnoSun continues to actively develop, finance, build and operate numbers of different renewable energy projects across the country and beyond. InnoSun is currently the largest local supplier of power to NamPower. With its 17 years of experience in the wind industry thanks to its mother company, InnoVent; InnoVent has built 105 MW farms in South Africa through its daughter company, InnoWind.

Cornelis Grotius, general manager at Johnson Renew, says that the company's ability to offer a turnkey solution such as this was a major advantage for InnoSun as it ensured a seamless operation.

The contract with InnoSun started in June 2017 and was completed mid-August with the wind farm coming on line end August 2017. Apart from the lifts, Johnson Renew also transported a total of 27 abnormal loads from the port of Luderitz to the site, a distance of some 9 km of which 5 km was on a national route and the balance on a private road.

Grotius says there are currently no cranes of this lifting capability available in Namibia, but that this was only one of the reasons why Johnson Renew was contracted as the customer's TCI partner.

He explains that lifts of this nature involve heavy loads installed at extreme heights and it is critical that the lifting activity is undertaken by a company that fully understands the associated risks and has the necessary competence and experience.

“Lifting such large components on a wind farm also present other challenges; chief amongst these is the fact that the wind farm is obviously situated in a windy region of the country,” he continues. Notably Johnson Renew has completed numerous wind farm lifts across the southern African region and has an established reputation in this sector for performing these safely and to the required standards.

Important value added services are Johnson Renew’s in-house project management and engineering capabilities, which facilitate the requisite engineering planning and risk management activities prior to the actual execution of the work. This also allows Johnson Renew to provide an optimal fit-for-purpose lifting solution that is both cost effective and safe.

The wind turbines stand 80 metres tall and are fitted with blades that are 45,3 metres in length. The heaviest component on the turbines is the generator unit with a weight of 65,7 ton. The turbine type is an XEMCXE93-2000 wind turbine.

“The depth of our crane fleet is also a benefit to the customer as this allows the flexibility to provide solutions irrespective of the lifting requirements. In the case of the Ombepo Wind Farm we used an LTM 1750-9.1 hydraulic mobile crane which has a 750 ton lifting capacity,” Grotius says.

Johnson Renew has an operating philosophy of supporting local communities in areas where it secures projects and in line with this important strategy the company contracted a local crane hire company to provide two hydraulic mobile cranes (one 90 t unit and one 170 t unit) as support cranes to the main crane for this lifting project. These cranes were used for the assembly and relocation of the main crane as well as the tailing of the tower sections.

Grotius says that the strategy of economic input into the local population also extended to the employment of riggers, technicians and crane operators as well as general labour. Use was also made of the local supply chain wherever possible and skills transfer was applied where appropriate.

“By developing the local community’s skills base, we are not only empowering them for future sustainability but we are also feeding money back into the regional economy,” he says. From site establishment to final handover the company was in the region for just over two and a half months during which time the community benefited.

Johnson Renew has a strong safety and quality track record in arduous and complicated lifting conditions, and Grotius says the company is well positioned to meet demanding project requirements.

LIFTING PIC 01 : Johnson Renew was responsible for installation of components at the Ombepo Wind Farm in Namibia.

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